

Calories: It's a Matter of Balance

With all the fad diets and quick weight loss schemes being promoted today it is no wonder people are confused about the best way to manage their weight. Research shows that no matter what approach people use, successful weight management always boils down to calorie balance.

A calorie is simply a unit of measurement used to measure energy. Our bodies need calories to function. How many calories you need everyday depends upon your age, gender, size and activity level. Most adults need between 1600 to 2200 calories a day.

The food we eat provides calories in the form of carbohydrates, protein and fat. Alcohol is another source of calories.

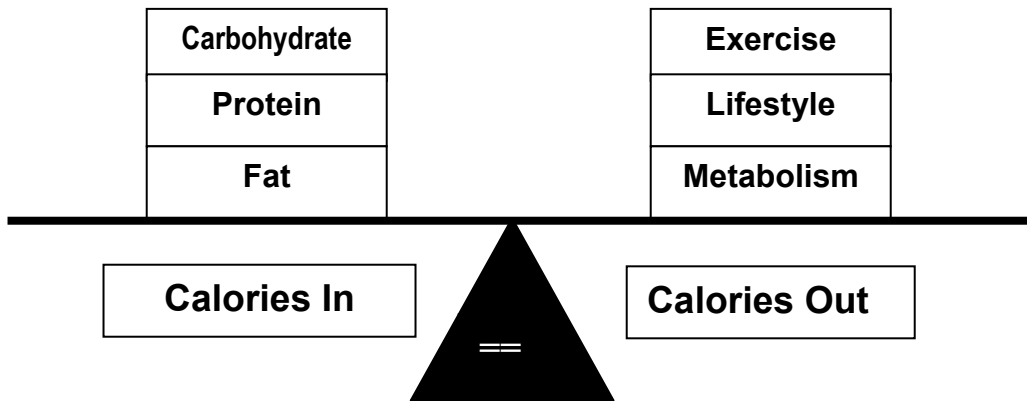
1 gm carb = 4 calories
1 gm protein = 4 calories
1 gm fat = 9 calories
1 gm alcohol = 7 calories

If we take in more calories than our bodies need, that extra energy is stored as fat. If we take in fewer calories than our bodies need, we use our fat stores for energy. One pound fat stores 3500

calories. So, if you eat just an extra 100 calories per day beyond what you need, those calories will be stored as fat. By the end of a month you will have almost gained an extra pound of fat (31 days x 100 calories = 3100 calories).

If you want to lose that pound you either need to eat less, exercise more or do both. For example to lose a pound a week you would need to go for a daily brisk 30 minute walk (burning an extra 200 calories) and cut out 300 calories from your day's meals and snacks (eat smaller portions, choose fruit instead of candy, use 1 less tablespoon less salad dressing). By the end of the week you should be a pound lighter (7 days x 500 calories = 3500 calories).

To maintain your current weight, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that you balance calories from foods and beverages with physical activity. So the next time a doughnut starts calling your name, remember it's time to get moving.



When you balance the food you eat with physical activity you can maintain your current weight.

If you eat this

- 1 piece chocolate cake (425 calories).....
- 1 Snickers bar (280 calories).....
- 1 ½ oz. bag of potato chips (225 calories).....
- 12 oz. soft drink (150 calories).....
- 1 orange (60 calories).....
- 1 carrot (25 calories).....

You'll have to walk

- 82 minutes (about 8200 steps)
- 54 minutes (about 5400 steps)
- 44 minutes (about 4400 steps)
- 30 minutes (about 3000 steps)
- 11 minutes (about 1100 steps)
- 5 minutes (about 500 steps)

Calculated for a 150 lb. person walking 3 mph (20 minute mile)



It doesn't take much to put on the pounds.

To prevent gradual weight gain, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest making small decreases in food and beverage calories and increasing physical activity. A recent study published in the Journal of American Medical Association followed 4,487 healthy young adults for 15 years and evaluated their fitness levels and risk for heart disease. The average weight gain over that time period for both men and women of all races was 28 pounds or about 1-2 pounds a year. The excess number of calories that leads to that weight gain is very small – only about a change in 100 calories a day.

How many calories are you eating?

There are many tools to help you estimate your caloric intake. First you have to keep a food record for a few days. Then you need to learn how many calories you ate. You can find that information on food labels (note the serving size), in books or on the internet. Here a couple of resources we recommend:

- **MyPyramid Tracker-** <http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov> An online dietary and physical activity assessment tool that provides information on diet quality, physical activity status, nutrition messages, and links to nutrient and physical activity information. Allows tracking of intake and activity for a year.
- **The Calorie King-** www.CalorieKing.com An extensive database of foods is available free on-line. This company also publishes a pocket reference- *The Doctor's Pocket Calorie, Fat & Carbohydrate Counter* that is available in most bookstores.

4 Easy Ways to Cut Calories

1. **Change your drinking habits.** Switching from a 20 ounce soda to a 12 ounce soda will cut 100 calories. Substituting 12 ounces of diet soft drink or flavored water for 12 ounces of regular soda would cut 150 calories.
2. **Have a special order.** Leave the cheese or mayonnaise off your burger and you'll save about 100 calories. Leave off both of the se two high fat toppers and you'll save 200 calories.
3. **Eat a smaller portion.** With today's super size portions, you could always leave a little on your plate. When faced with that generous 3 cup portion of pasta (600 calories), eat half and you'll save 300 calories.
4. **Satisfy your sweet tooth with less.** Instead of regular size chocolate bar (230 calories), savor 5 Hershey kisses (130 calories). Better yet, have piece of fruit (60 calories).

How many calories do you burn in a day?

Keep an activity log and then check out **Calories Per Hour** www.caloriesperhour.com developed by a consumer with sound advice and accurate information. Calculate how many calories you burn for doing a wide variety of activities – from accordion playing to walking. Also calculates Body Mass Index, caloric intake and weight loss plans.

You may also want to consider having your resting metabolic rate measured to determine your baseline calorie needs. It is a simple test that is being offered by many area dietitians to help their clients manage their weight more effectively. Call the Nutrition Council office for more information.

